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Love and Loss in Thomas Hardy's Poetry: The Devastations of Time

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Abstract

Even though Thomas Hardy's poetry has been accused of showing little or no evolution over the long period of its development, it has also been considered to be intensely personal, since it references feelings of extreme loneliness which bring about a prolonged consideration of grief. The feelings of anguish and suffering that the poet encountered were triggered by several episodes of loss throughout his life; however, Hardy managed to create poems that not only dealt with either love or loss, but with how these aspects are created in the mind. Hardy's poetry often concentrates on tempering agony and objectifying it, by substituting literary figures for the object lost, while it involves a serious philosophic confrontation with the meaning and significance of that loss.

The aim in this project is to provide a broader perspective to this topic, by focusing on the interaction between feeling and abstract thought in selected poems by Hardy, chosen from several moments scattered through his work. In order to examine the aspects that determine how feeling is connected to thought within specific poems in his development, I will focus on how the poet intends to bring back the past and confront it. By analysing the poetic devices that uncover nostalgia and the desire to retrieve the past, I intend to point at some basic characteristics of Hardy's unique approach as a poet. Therefore, I will highlight the complexity that involves uniting two themes in the poems (love and loss) by considering the devices that Hardy uses in order to go beyond them and make them the basis for a serene, solid contemplation of time and its effects. I hope to show, in this way, how time serves in Hardy's poetry as the condescending factor of these strong poetic emotions.

Key words: love, loss, time, nostalgia, Thomas Hardy, poetry

0. Introduction

In the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century, Thomas Hardy wrote poems that, through his living years, dealt with topics of love and loss that were constantly intermingled with time. Thomas Hardy's poems have caused a lot of controversies among critics that have considered his poetry too intense, too simplistic and even showing no evolution. Hardy collected a great amount of poetry and managed to cause an intense effect in his verses. His poetry includes both, the simple language and striking feelings: the poet manages to evoke, through simple language, devastated emotions that arouse extreme agony. In addition to this, Hardy makes use of ghosts, places and memories that are present within himself and, therefore, in his verses. In the selection of poems we are going to deal with, we encounter both feelings of solitude and passion that evoke anguish.

0.1 Hardy as a poet of 'Time'

To begin with, we should look at the way Thomas Hardy writes poetry in comparison to the poets of his time. Theodore Weiss has argued that Thomas Hardy was being used as a "tool" to beat the modern-day poets, since he wanted to innovate and as a result, he is specially differentiated from others. However, scholars like Irving Howe (quoted in Langbaum, 1995: 27) argue that Hardy's poems can be felt as more durable by asserting that his poems span two cultural eras while refusing to be locked into either, which makes it a source of his peculiar attractiveness. In regard to these studies, Donald Davie (1972) discusses that the post-World War II British poets rejected the productions emerging from the modernists to the traditional way of writing. Thus, Hardy's resonances, in poems such as "Neutral Tones" (1898), address the ordinary reality, unlike the poetry written by other poets of the time. Because of that, Davie claims Hardy is the most outstanding influence in Britain. Even so, the ghosts present in Hardy's poetry are hard to pin down since they seem to be an inheritance of the "Virgilian stage" properties and Hardy was, in fact, an Atheist.

According to the critic, Hardy might be considered a forerunner of Larkin but he also believes he is a minor poet because of the “untransformed reality of his poetry”. (Langbaum, 1995: 29). Also, it is Johnson (1991) who claims that Hardy can make use of colourless places to portray emotions, as well as places not moving because of the memory created in the mind of the poetic voice (Johnson, 1991: 98). Simultaneously, in many of his poems Hardy travels the countryside, which is linked to the fact that time is always present in his poetry. Hardy attaches himself to a microcosm of specific places at quite specific times.

Hardy’s poetry can, at first sight, be easy to grasp. Hardy’s poems show that poetry can be easily understood and created through common sense for most English speaking readers. However, Hardy’s ghosts from his ballads are not only fantastic or folklore-like ghosts, but in his lyrics they are also “psychological ghosts of the Wordsworthian involuntary memory” (Langbaum, 1995: 30). Thus, the poet seems to be blending mystery, the immutability of the places and, particularly, time in his poetry. For this reason, his poems may be seen to come as uneven.

Hardy can be considered a major poet because he innovated: he modernised and transmitted what was useable in 19th century poetry, even though by his simplicity many critics refer to him as, paradoxically, a “first class” minor poet. Evaluating him against the classic modernist poets, he is in success in other levels because there seems to be a great variety of tones in his poetry. Hardy’s influence on later poets denotes a powerful connection with the whole 19th century poetry but Hardy revised the poets from that century, while admiring them. Even considering previous poets greater than he, Hardy made revisions of romanticists like Wordsworth and Shelley. We can consider how Thomas Hardy was able to turn himself into, to a certain extent, a major poet because of his use of topics that other authors at his time did not. However, there is more than we can encounter at first sight in his poetry, as the indirect reference to time appears to be always there. So, I would like to point out that the devices that Hardy uses are in constant allusion to the remembrance of memories and its implications. Because of that, the poet can be considered as

a poet of “time”. Hence, I would argue that there is no point in considering him a poet of “minor” or “major” scale, since his imagery is so powerful in relation to what memories hold that it is a “poet of time” what should be a proper labelling for Hardy.

The imagery of landscapes that Hardy employs in his poems play an important role in the allusion to time. Linda M. Austin (1998) discusses that in the *Poems of 1912-13* the reader can see how the poet has used the landscape with what he claims is an ‘imminence’, but without symbolism it is not properly reached, so the concurrent capacity of nature cannot serve as an antidote to the lamenter’s conflictive yet internal suffering (Austin, 1998: 5). Linked to this, time serves as an imaginary fortress to the person feeling love or loss, or both simultaneously. In his theses, John H. Astington (1968) quotes J.G. Southworth since the critic studied to a great extent the issue of time in Hardy’s poetry. Southworth states the following:

A preliminary glance at Hardy's images on Time supports the theory of the importance of his moods. It is not enough to say that he has a "saddened sense of Time" or of the "vastness of Time". He subordinates his conception of Time to the emotional unity of the poem. [...] Time is a productive force, an evil force that separates lovers, or "dooms man's love to die". It is a condition, a builder and destroyer, a sportsman that "but rears his brood to kill", a spirit that destroys the good as easily as it destroys the evil. (Southworth 1947, cited in Astington 1968: 3)

It can be affirmed that the importance of time in Hardy’s poems is the key issue to understand the sentiment that he is trying to portray through his poems and the imagery that he uses. It is the fact that he uses time as a link that is going to make his poetry be felt more uniquely. The presence and absence behaviour that the ghosts’ in some of Hardy’s poems is present seems to suggest the lament of the poet as he intends to move on from his nostalgic thoughts. In Hardy’s poems there is a movement from presence to absence and vice versa, where the lamented, inevitable disappearance of the ghost is also, paradoxically, a “movement” from doubt to affirmation (Volsik, 2004).

0.2 Experience, the chronotope and time in Hardy's poetry

In connection to this, the poetry of the 19th and 20th centuries seem to be in connection with the notion of “poetry of experience”, a poetry constructed upon the deliberate disequilibrium between experience and idea, a contrast from which ideas can be abstracted. Thought and emotion were no longer seen as complementary, they gave different reports on reality (Langbaum, 1957). Hardy's poems seem to be reliant not only on the emotions that the speaker feels, but on the moral evolution brought about by the memory of those emotions.

Additionally, I would like to link my arguments to the Bakhtinian idea of the “chronotope”, which can be seen as “the road which is both a point of new departure, and a place for events to find their denouement. Time, as it were, fuses together with space and flows in it..., and the fundamental pivot is the flow of time” (Bahktin, 1981: 244). As we will see in the next sections, this concept can be very useful to understand Hardy's poems, as well as his way of uniting time with places and memories.

The selection of poems we are going to deal in this paper was decided upon the date they were written, their presence in anthologies of Hardy and the importance of the poetic devices that are encountered in them; the aim of the selection is to prove that Hardy's verses, indeed, investigate how the psyche operates when memories are triggered by grief, and that the result of that investigation is the poem itself. In that sense, my aim in this paper is to investigate the poetic devices that Thomas Hardy uses in order to convey feelings both of love and loss through time, by linking them with a sense of space and place.

This perspective will allow me to go beyond the debates considering whether Thomas Hardy was a “major” or a “minor” poet; my intention with this paper is rather to uncover whether the poet, through the topics and the devices that he used, became able to express in complex yet accessible ways the feelings of loss and nostalgia, and the way in which they are attached to the experience of time.

1. Hardy's poems from late 19th century

In this section I am going to show how, through the use of poetic devices and places that Hardy uses, the poet intends to relieve a time that cannot be recovered. I will examine how Hardy's poems contain descriptions, images and places that recall someone's past memories, by considering the different poetic devices he uses. The poems I am going to focus on in this section, which belong to the late 19th century, contain places and gestures that are product of the poetic use to which Hardy puts the subjects of imagination and memory.

One of the poems that I find interesting to begin my discussion with is "Near Lanivet, 1878", since it shows the remembrance of a love that is no longer active in the present. The poem starts off by the poetic voice giving a definition of the place that he is encountering, as well as the woman's status of tiredness. The poem initially reads like a novel, or a piece of narrative:

There was a stunted handpost just on the crest,
Only a few feet high:
She was tired, and we stopped in the twilight-time for her rest,
At the crossways close thereby.

Let us notice that the use of specific details that the poet is using in order to depict a specific place where he wants to immerse the reader into, since there is an essential need to mark the space where the woman is: "at the crossways close thereby". Thus, it seems that the poetic voice is resisting the movement of time by being stuck in the past, seen through the description of this place.

In the second stanza, Hardy seems to be describing the woman's attitude as one of sadness, as we can notice in: "Her sad face sideways thrown": therefore, she is not only physically weary, but also emotionally. If we link this stanza with the third, we see how Hardy unites her previous gesture of the woman with the crucifixion: "Her white-clothed form at this dim-lit cease of day / Made her look as one crucified", which can be interpreted as how hurting the remembrance of this

gesture can be, hurting as crucifixion itself. In addition to this, the poem offers a description of a love that has lost its vitality; as the light goes out of the day we are reminded how, at the original crucifixion, “darkness covered the whole earth” and we witness a scene that suggests the defeated future for the couple, a future that the whole poem leans towards (Johnson, 1991: 213). This is confirmed in the last line of the stanza, where the poetic voice cries out “Don’t!”, hinting at how hurting the situation is or may become.

In the following stanza we come to the realisation that a thought came to the woman’s head, expressed by the words “I wish I had not leant so”. Additionally, in the following stanza, the speaker and the woman seem to be moving and looking back. Both the man and the woman appear “worldless”, since they do not know how to articulate what they have been thinking. There is a lot of nostalgia, especially in this fifth stanza, when by looking back they can see the hand-post: “And looking back we could see the handpost still / In the solitude of the moor”. In poetry we can find a past experience of the speaker in relation with the idea that the experience has created later in his mind, which is giving him a different reality (Langbaum, 1957: 39). In the poem we can see both how the speaker is remembering the hand-post and the way he is feeling this nostalgia, which are two different things. However, both aspects are created in the mind because of the grief and sentimentality the speaker feels.

In the next stanza the woman expresses what is going through her mind “‘I did not think how 'twould look in the shade, / When I leant there like one nailed.’”. This can be linked to the man’s response “There’s nothing in it. For YOU, anyhow!”. There is a clear sense of anguished doubt, expressed in the following lines “Yet I wonder... If no one is bodily crucified now, / in spirit one may be!”. However, the most interesting stanza to look, also in relation to the topic of crucifixion, is the last one:

And we dragged on and on, while we seemed to see
In the running of Time's far glass
Her crucified, as she had wondered if she might be

Some day.-Alas, alas!

The poem describes “the running of Time’s glass” as in an hourglass, which Hardy imagines running out, so that their dark “moment of vision” foretold will be enacted (Johnson, 1991: 213). The poem does not only express the gesture remembered by the poetic voice and the interaction between two lovers, but also the pass of time and the revisiting of a place that now brings different feelings. So, in this poem we encounter grievance, loss and the running of time, all materialised by the act of remembrances of the central images (the signpost). The fear of pain expressed by the woman, however, is only a suggestion of what would come later in her life, and the final repetition by the speaker (“Alas, alas!”) hints at that terrible pain without explaining it: it manages to suggest it, and leaves it to the reader to understand it.

“A Broken Appointment” (1893) is straightforward enough in offering lines that link the speaker with memories of the person he has lost, since that the person did not show up in their “appointment”. The poetic voice accentuates the fact that he waited for a very long time and uses long vowels and a dark mood to reflect this. It is interesting to look at the first stanza, since it exemplifies the very essence of what we are looking at:

You did not come,
and marching Time drew on, and wore me numb
Yet less for loss of your dear presence there
Than that I thus found lacking in your make
That high compassion which can overbear
Reluctance for pure lovingkindness’ sake
Grieved I, when, as the hope-hour stroked its sum,
You did not come.

The “here” of the poem (space) and the “absence” of the woman (also occupying a space in which she is not) are united with time (“Time drew on”), and one can claim that the speaker’s mind travels through this space. Moving through time and space, the poetic voice is creating memories, and thus generating a sense of absence in the mind. The lover waited for someone who did not

come, apparently because this person no longer loved him, as it is seen in the second stanza and the conclusion of the poem. It is interesting to refer to the notion of chronotope since it establishes what we are dealing with in these poems: this poem, taken as an example, is going back to a specific moment in time and space that the poetic speaker has evoked in his mind. The fact that the poem starts off by addressing to the person who did not come, “you”, emphasises how the poetic voice focuses on his feeling about this person, and how the moment of waiting affected him. Because of this, the poem also seems to suggest a sense of unrequited and non-reciprocal love, letting the reader perceive a feeling of absolute rejection.

Regarding the poetic devices that we encounter, in this first stanza we find alliterations, such as “less for loss” and “than that I thus found”. Here, the poetic voice seems to come to a realisation: the lover no longer has compassion for him. In the last couplet, then, Hardy creates a feeling of compassion towards the poetic voice: “Grieved I, when, as the hope-hour stroke its sum,” so that the reader is able to empathise with the voice as he grieves because “the hope-hour” has passed by. In the second stanza, the tone grows more serious since Hardy finishes the poem with “You love not me?” implying that the lover did not show up simply because she did not love him, and was unable to act with compassion. The poet is trying to unite what happened in that specific moment (that the lover did not appear) with the passing of time (‘and marching Time drew on’) and of course, with the feeling he was left with: numbness.

You love not me,
And love alone can lend you loyalty;
—I know and knew it. But, unto the store
Of human deeds divine in all but name,
Was it not worth a little hour or more
To add yet this: Once you, a woman, came
To soothe a time-torn man; even though it be
You love not me?

This stanza also begins with “You love not me” and the voice seems to be pondering further about what occurred in the first stanza. The lyrical voice seems to have accepted the events

now, that is why the tone changes, and acknowledges that his love for the woman is not reciprocal and she, in fact, did not have the capacity to offer him simple companionship for an hour. In order to accentuate this matter, Hardy uses a verbal repetition, seen in “I know and knew it”. Another poetic device that we encounter is alliteration “deeds divine”, referring to the action of compassion that the woman did not perform; Hardy makes use of alliteration in the expression “time-torn man”, which emphasises the sense of grievance in which the poetic voice is left in his remembrance of the “broken appointment”. It has been argued that in Hardy’s poems we find a principle theorised by John W. Dunne, the idea of a “serial time”, where past, present and future coexist (Volsik, 2004). The reader can see this through the whole of the poem, where the sense of grievance is not abandoned, but returns with greater strength as it is evoked by the speaker, as he considers his previous love with the woman and the constant going back and forth to the past relationship. To conclude the poem, Hardy seems to change the tone of the poetic voice, shifting to a doubtful tone, since it finishes with a question “You love not me?”. It suggests that the poetic voice is still yearning for the abandoned love and the significance that it had, while he is still thinking about the sense of absence felt in the lost appointment.

As we are seeing, Hardy’s symbols and metaphors are as present in his poetry as objective realism or metonymy. Evaluating him against the classic modernist poets, he is successful due to his great variety of tones and emphasis on other topics, as it can be seen in, for instance, “Neutral Tones” (1898). The poem is, certainly, a claim for a neutrality. For this reason, it has been seen as a reaction against romantic animation and colourfulness. For Hardy nature is, in fact, indifferent and alien, and largely created in the mind. In the poem we notice that there is a valueless love: it is not valueless now that is over, but even when it was active. There is an empty feeling and a reflection of melancholy seen in the title, since the tones are “neutral”, involving apathy. The poet manages to evoke powerful ironies by invoking the pathetic fallacy in order to suggest its incapability but also, at the same time, its psychological inevitability under the pressure of emotions. Consequently, we

conceive nature's neutrality as malicious, encountering an allegory and personification. Also, according to Johnson (1991), "Neutral Tones" is wholly devoid of colour and movement; "its wintry stillness and silence an integral part of its mood, the inanition which succeeds a once passionate love gone irrevocably sour" (Johnson, 1991: 178). Lovers have nothing significant to say to each other, the landscape has nothing to say to them; where it happened is as important as what took place in the anguished impression which the memory holds. The language is also neutral and completely unaffected through the poem. Focusing on poetic devices, we can also find alliterations here: "leaves lay" or "wings with wrong", which help accentuate the slow pace that the poem engages, as well as emphasising the anxiety felt by the lyrical voice. In the last stanza, the adjective "keen" with its double sense of "eager" and "painful", the wordplay of "wings" and "wrong" and even a return to the opening, with the brilliant "turn" of God-curst sun, perverting that primal source of light into something similar to a malign presence; all these are impressive aspects of a poem which, one might say, gives a voice to mute despair and disillusion.

We could also mention poems such as "Hap" (1866) and "Subalterns" (1901) show nature's indifference in opposition to Wordsworth's belief in nature. Hardy's treatment of Wordsworth's subject matters regarding childhood, memory and the evasion of consciousness can be found also in "The Self- Unseeing" (1901), which includes a happy childhood scene, which is again reliant on time, but still exemplified by Hardy's own way of seeing it (Langbaum, 1995: 45). In order to convey two opposite feelings, namely love and loss, Hardy tries to express the indifference that is found in nature, and therefore makes them more intense, since the topics of nature and remembrance are reversed from the uses they were given by previous poets. It is impressive how Hardy tries to unite elements of nature, such as birds or the sun, to exemplify his own state of mind and the remembrance of things that are no longer in his life.

2. Poems from 1900-1910s

In this section, I am going to go through the poems that I have selected from 1900-1910s, in order to show through the analysis of lyrical devices, that the poetic voice manages to create a sense of reminiscence that is also an exploration of time.

In “The Revisitation” (1904), the voice is that of a soldier who finds himself in a town in the month of July. The soldier realises that he was near this place that, years ago, he and his lover separated, and comes in fact to see her again. In fact, “It seems that something induces him to make his way back to the place of their parting, where indeed ‘She’ appears still haunted by memories of their love” (Faulkner, 1993: 182); the speaker, however, is shocked by how much the woman has aged. We can, then, see how the speaker’s mind is stuck somewhere that does no longer exist. More precisely, the poem starts off by waking up at night time, in an “ancient country”, and the poetic voice begins reminiscing “recalled hopes” from a “brave and bright time”, meaning better times than the ones he is living now. In the first stanza the repetition of “ancient” it indicates two things: that his memory is revisiting some place he has been in the past and also that this place brings old reminiscences.

In the second stanza, the speaker is more precise about the memory of the person who went away and never returned; Hardy also adds the month of “July”, specifying an explicit month to make it more concise. Besides “July” being repeated several time within the poem, we also find an alliteration: “July”, “joyless” and “just”, which gives a hint of what the speaker is feeling at that exact moment: anything except joy. Connecting this to the fourth stanza, the voice exposes that “she” was seen leaving him. The verses denote the man’s weariness, as it is shown in the fifth stanza (“but now a war-worn stranger”). Hardy is quite consistent with the places since he is giving descriptions and indications. We notice this with the line: “down the High Street and beyond the lamps”, which gives the poem a more realistic and precise tone, emphasising the remembrance of the memories.

Moreover, the lines “with a dim unowned emotion”... “to retrace a track so dear” exemplifies how this feeling goes back to a place that is already gone. The person remembering these things walks with thoughts “half-uttered” in a place that he knows well, because he is capable of remembering perfectly. It is also important to look at “maybe flustered by my presence” and “just as all those years back”, since the lines show that the poet’s imaginary presence is travelling back in time to a past time. The most interesting stanza, however, is the fourteenth:

And so, living long and longer
In a past that lived no more, my eyes discerned there, suddenly,
That a figure broke the skyline - first in vague contour, then stronger,
And was crossing near to me

This stanza shows how the poetic voice is aware that the past is gone but can distinguish, nevertheless, a “figure broke the skyline” and “was crossing” near him. It is thanks to these lines that we see how Hardy has managed to introduce the presence of a ghost that lives in the speaker’s mind. Also, the speaker is so reminiscent of the lover that he is actually feeling his touch and reliving, somehow, for the second time, certain things they shared:

Some long-missed familiar gesture,
Something wanted, struck me in the figure's pause to list and heed,
Till I fancied from its handling of its loosely wrapping vesture
That it might be She indeed.

The man called the name of the lover, “Agnette” and he even heard her reply “What - THAT voice? - here!”. Then, he led the lover where they would usually sit; the fact that the speaker linked “sank to slow unconsciousness” with “she was sitting still beside me” clearly shows that the man suspected the vision not to be not real but, rather, a product of his imagination.

In her image then I scanned
that which Time’s transforming chisel
had been tooling for 20 years

In the lines from above we notice how Hardy unites “Time”, “chisel” and “tooling” in the same stanza, as if time were a tool that transformed memory and the present. By the end of the poem, we notice that the woman is now old, and the soldier starts wondering if he “might have dogged her downward”. However, he is aware how tricky time and the imagination are, and he appears in a status of confusion because of that. Hardy finishes the poem with a stanza that includes a line of pure doubt: “Did we meet again?”.

In “I Said to Love” (1912), we find how the speaker tries to make a personification out of “Love”, which is the emotion that is hurting him. Levinson (2006) argues, when discussing this poem, that “not only does the melancholy state hold off aggressive, transformative, abstractive engagement with the world, it promotes self-experience which is not organised by spitting and objectification” (Levinson, 2006: 553). Hardy, by writing “It is not now as in old days / When men adored thee and thy ways / All else above;” expresses that the concept of love itself is now different from what it was in the past. The strong feeling of love is seen by the use of alliteration with “Boy, the Bright, the One”, which accentuates how a child (Cupid) could be seen as a symbol of utter love. In the second stanza we acknowledge that “Love” is masculine and he refers to it as “him”, which may mean that it is more harsh and less forgiving. The poetic voice also claims that “We now know more of thee than then;”, meaning that humanity knows more of love now than it previously did. Without the experience of love, human beings seem to be lacking something: “We clamoured thee that thou would'st please / Inflict on us thine agonies”.

The theme slightly changes in the third stanza, where it is observed that the devastating feeling of love can, paradoxically, make one feel like an angel. The poetic voice seems to be contradicting itself since Hardy adds up “...features pitiless, / And iron daggers of distress;”, which is an alliteration and is in contrast with the purity mentioned before. Therefore, Hardy seems to suggest that love is beautiful, but at the same time there is a lot of suffering that comes along with it. The last stanza starts off by saying goodbye to Love: “Depart then, Love!...”. The unity seen in

the beginning of the previous stanzas is now changed, as a way of closure. The exclamation shows a more intense emotion, since now the poetic voice wants love to disappear because it is too hurting. And here the poem turns towards the consideration of love as the force that moves humanity onwards though time, coming to the conclusion that, without it, mankind should cease to exist, and accepting that solution as a valid one: “We are too old in apathy! / Mankind shall cease.—So let it be, / I said to Love”.

In “The Voice” (1914), the speaker recollects past events, and the past and present unite to form a new synthesis. It seems as if his memory has played a trick on him, which has been triggered by the evocation of the person he is remembering. The impression that time creates in the poem complicates further, however, since it suggests that time can move back to an idyllic state that does no longer exist. It seems that “the movement of time can be circular and move back to a perfect state that has been destroyed” (Astington, 1967: 53). This indicates how the speaker is going back, for a moment, to a past time in his life that is no longer present, but which constantly lives on in his head.

Going more in depth in the first stanza, we notice how the setting is drawn as the poetic voice is lamenting. The alliteration and repetitions in the beginning (“Woman much missed, how you call to me, call to me”) highlight the speaker’s feeling for the absent woman that he is addressing. There is a strong desire for the moment when he was with the woman, “When our day was fair”. The enjambment helps to portray the turmoil and disorientation felt by the man, as the woman is no longer there. The mood changes a little bit in the second stanza, since the speaker doubts that the sound he seems to hear corresponds indeed to the voice of the woman. In “Can it be you that I hear? Let me view you then / Standing as when I drew near to the town.” There seems to be an internal rhyme, as there is the use of “you” and “view”, which offers a pun. The poetic voice remembers the delightful moment in his past relation by recreating the place “Where you would wait”, confirming that he still thinks, specifically, about the place where the woman waited for him.

Hardy's use of the subjunctive mode, the conditional and question marks suggests the status of uncertainty that the poetic voice feels, along with expressive emotions. It is a delicate moment for the speaker and establishes the ground for the imagery of the wind that is explored more in depth in the next stanza.

The third stanza emphasises the doubt of the poetic voice, as the quatrain seems to imply a questioning. The lyrical voice questions the woman's very existence and whether the reunion that he would cherish will indeed take place. The hesitancy felt by the man is emphasised by the use of sibilants and onomatopoeia. The wind in this stanza serves as an identification with the voice of the woman, but the speaker cannot be sure whether he is hearing one or the other: "Or is it only the breeze, in its listlessness". The stanza ends with a question mark, again, confirming the essential doubts of the man. Astington (1967) claims that in the third stanza, the poetic voice turns the objective reality, where time exists, on to this imaginative creation, and realises the impossibility of this movement. The poem is located in the real world, whilst the actual details of this reality are images for the state of mind of the poetic voice. Further, the critic claims that in the last stanza both sorts of reality are encountered, the lyrical voice recognises the power that memory has and therefore avoids being simply emotional (Astington, 1967: 55). So, we have a collision of times, present and past, in the poem: the wind is unceasingly blowing (in the present) and the woman is calling (in the past). Both seem to express a call of desperation residing in the speakers' mind.

This poem, written in dactylic tetrameter, exemplifies nostalgia but it also expresses the confusion felt by the man at the time of hearing, seemingly, the voice of a dead woman. This exhibits a tension created by the contrast between past and present. We might add that the temporal structure here is even further complicated: the woman as the poet imagines her appears in his solitary present just as she was in the distant, as opposed to the more recent past. As Johnson (1991) puts it, the tone of the poem derives from Hardy's wish to shut out the voice of the title; the carapace of resentment deriving from when "you had changed" is at first impervious to the

woman's repeated call to remember. However, after having recalled the person in full detail, the vision fades, the landscape resumes its "listlessness" and the ghost dissolves to a "wan wistlessness" (Johnson, 1991: 225). Thus, the voice the speaker imagines seems to reside in a very precise place identified by his own memory: the place where she once stood, but which no longer exists. For Hardy, the experience of memory depends heavily on place, the specific space through which memory travels.

3. The climax in 'Under the Waterfall' (1928)

What we have analysed seems to reach its peak in the poem that I am going to deal with in this section, as it seems to deal with all these aspects in a longer and more meditative form. The fact that it belongs to a later phase in the poet's life (1928) also triggers the fact that, perhaps, Hardy had developed even further the concepts of time and memory.

One of Hardy's later poems, "Under the Waterfall" (1928) tells the event of a picnic by the waterfall. A voice is evoked through a memory of having a picnic near a waterfall with a romantic partner:

'Whenever I plunge my arm, like this,
In a basin of water, I never miss
The sweet sharp sense of a fugitive day
Fetched back from its thickening shroud of gray.
Hence the only prime
And real love-rhyme
That I know by heart,
And that leaves no smart,
Is the purl of a little valley fall
About three spans wide and two spans tall
Over a table of solid rock,
And into a scoop of the self-same block;
The purl of a runlet that never ceases
In stir of kingdoms, in wars, in peaces;
With a hollow boiling voice it speaks
And has spoken since hills were turfless peaks.'

In this first stanza, we notice how the poem seems to be told by a woman in retrospection of a moment that happened long time ago, and alludes to an encounter from the past that cannot be retrieved. For instance, with “fugitive day”, Hardy intends to intensify how quickly time passes. Also, the oxymoron “sweet sharp” shows that the memory is wonderful but also painful, whereas “shroud of gray”, expresses how the memory is being forgotten, which will result in a loss in the course of life. In addition to this, it is interesting to analyse the following lines: “Is a purl of a little valley fall / About three spans wide and two spans tall / Over a table of solid rock, / And into a scoop of the self-same block”. We can notice how human relationships have little impact to the environment or landscape (once again in his work, then, the pathetic fallacy seems not operative). Hardy chose the lexical item “purl” in order to make the waterfall feel like something worth witnessing: it is through his carefully chosen vocabulary that we can feel that human relationships are inconstant, unlike the setting of the poem, that lives through time.

In the second stanza, the voice of the man sounds clearly. The man is doubting the woman; we have a dialogue going on. He is questioning why the woman is getting such powerful emotions from just putting or “plunging” her arm into a bowl of water: “And why does plunging your arm in a bowl / Full of spring water, bring throbs to your soul?”. Hardy uses words which represent the water falling down the waterfall, but also the ups and downs of the relationship the man and woman share. For instance, “plunge” and “slipped” can be easily connected through alliteration and content to the waterfall and to human affairs, as the poem seems to be playing repeatedly with these words. In the lines that follow, the woman begins to describe what she found under the water, evoked by words such as “prized” and “smoothness opalized”; these adjectives, and precisely “opalized” make clear that the object is showing distinct colours. Moreover, the poem acquires a dreamy tone since the woman is answering the man with a detailed explanation of what she remembers: the description given makes it clear to the reader that, for the lovers, that was not simply a memory. For the first voice, it was “fetched back from its thickening shroud of gray”,

meaning that the memory returned: a lot of imagery is used in this poem to help encapsulate the reader into the thought process of the first voice, so that the reader him or herself relives the beautiful memory like the voice seems to be doing.

It is noticeable that, in the third stanza, the bottle from which the two lovers drank symbolises their love; however, when she went to clean it it fell into the stream. Again, “sank” is another word associated with falling: the lovers are attempting to recover the glass by plunging their arms into the water to retrieve the bottle. The actions of the lovers being “stooped and plumbed” help the sound of words and make the poem flow. The fact that the bottle has fallen could represent how the love of the couple has deteriorated: the bottle will stay there forever contrasting with their love, which will not. The line “from the past awakens a sense of that time” is clearly a remembrance of dipping her arm into water. The woman had dropped the bottle into the stream but it has not been retrieved by any of them; she was able to see the bottle “under the fall, in a crease of the stone”. In addition, we see water as if it was a poem in itself: with the lines “And the leafy pattern of china-ware / The hanging pants that were bathing there” we notice how for the woman, it was a beautiful memory because she has not forgotten any detail of it. The female voice is showing us that recalling an event occurs because it is still fresh in the memory, even though it is distant.

In the last stanza, we are given another vision of the lover’s affair: “And its presence adds to the rhyme of love / Persistently sung by the fall above” giving a hint that the lover’s love will go on, just like the waterfall has water falling down constantly and persistently. Friedman (1967) argues that “the moment which is recalled, then, not as an idealised past to be contrasted with a mundane present, nor as a sentimental comment on the terrible transience of all things caught in time but simply as something which has somehow managed to be both, beautiful and timeless” (Friedman, 1967: 227). Hardy uses the waterfall as a symbol to unite nature and love: the waterfall is, then, the symbol of the couple’s love, and it is extremely important since it is the main source of memories that have lived through time for the woman. This does not involve a romantic

use of the pathetic fallacy, but rather a transformation of space that is operated by memory, and evoked in the formal and figural structure of the poem.

Austin (1998) claims that in “Under the Waterfall” (1928) nature, the space of loss, becomes the source of moral transformation: the rocks of the scenery are the basis for the lost feeling, so the poetic voice faces a landscape of continual and reminiscent absence (Austin, 1998: 9). This would seem to be quite Wordsworthian, and it is a possible reading of the poem. However, taking into account the poems that we have analysed in this paper, it is possible to read it in another way: we can see in the poem the way in which two people, because of the effect of an involuntary remembrance, manage to experience memory, endowing objects (the waterfall, the rocks, the bottle) with an iconological worth and giving a poetic value to the notions of vacancy and loss. The exercise of memory, awakened by an involuntary recollection, leads to the patterning of the poem; this helps us to see clearly how Hardy uses time and space as a basis for creation in the mind.

Regarding how time is seen in this poem, I would like to unite the analysis, again, with the notion of chronotope. This poem serves as a good example of the fusion of space and time, which are inseparable from one another and always coloured by emotions. It is through poems that Hardy is uniting time and space, as seen in “Under the Waterfall”, since the memory of the waterfall is making the lovers go back to a place where they have been before, in a specific moment that has become unique in their remembrance. Spaces are, in fact, felt and filled with the lovers’ emotions, and they acquire a unique meaning to them: the meaning of this space is linked to the specific time in which they inhabited it. There is a union of time and place in the places that the lovers remember, and which are contained in a very specific form by the poem that the poet creates, and which we experience as readers.

4. Conclusion

To conclude, Hardy seems to be, indeed, a poet of time. As we have seen in the poems we have analysed, Hardy intends to give very specific details to transmit certain emotions that are still living in the memory of the speakers. In this paper, poems have been analysed, not only in terms of content but also looking into the poetic devices, in order to understand them fully and see what the poet intended to do. In doing so, we have witnessed how Hardy is, indeed, a poet that is constantly working with the notions of time, memory, love and loss. Therefore, these motifs can be linked to the Bakhtinian notion of the chronotope, as it is noticeable the way in which Hardy is working on the union of one specific space and one specific time, and how this union travels through the speaker's memory.

In the poems from late 19th century, we have seen the early development of Hardy. As a matter of fact, we have seen how the speaker in "Near Lanivet, 1878" uses specific details to depict certain places that are in his mind, and to what an extent he seems emotionally tired. These aspects are united to the passing of time, as we see in "Broken Appointment"; in this same poem, Hardy tries to unite time with space and with the absence of the beloved, in order to show how it develops and changes in the mind of the speaker. Hardy constantly tries to put into verse the feelings of the speaker of the poem, which is evident in "Neutral Tones", managing to create a way to address the moral position of neutrality, or rather, apathy. Accordingly, in this section we have seen how Hardy is capable of uniting feelings of apathy, rejection and how they are structured through memory, and in the expression of memory.

In the poems from 1900-1910s, we can find the recurring presence of women. In "The Revisitation", the woman appears haunted by memories of the love she once shared with the man, but it is not clear to what an extent the scene that is depicted is a memory or a dream. The use of memory, then, and its relation to specific places, originates the poetic voices, and the speakers integrate every single detail of the spaces that are evoked. In "I Said to Love", Hardy uses a

personification of Love, as the regret of the mistakes he made come back to his mind; we have also seen how this specific poem goes beyond the romantic uses of the pathetic fallacy. Aside from that, we have seen how the ghost of a dead woman is brought back in “The Voice”, in which the speaker is trying to go back to a past state that no longer exists. There is an emotional growth in the poems analysed in this second part, as there is the presence of haunting ghosts, but also the perception of a hostile or indifferent nature, thus dismantling the romantic notion of the pathetic fallacy.

In the last part of this paper, in “Under the Waterfall”, we have found many elements of the treatment of time and place that we had been encountering in the previous analysed poems. There are precise details again, such as the month of August (in the same way we found July in “The Revisitation”) and also the development of a complex sense of memory. We can consider this poem the peak of Hardy’s poems in this selection, as it unites the memory of a specific location, the lyrical voices of a woman and a man and their retrospection to past times. Hardy explores the devastations of time, and the dialogue between the man and the woman acquires a serene but saddened tone because of this; in this last poem, there is a deep awareness of a distant memory, and of how this memory can be bitter and yet beautiful. The poem is not Wordsworthian, as nature is not idealised, but recreated serenely through memory; the precise details that are evoked are not endowed with morality, but rather with a sense of loss.

Then, we can claim that throughout the evolution of Hardy as a poet, he integrated more and more different aspects in his poems, which eventually turned him into a sensitive and coherent poet of time. As we can see in “Under the Waterfall”, Hardy’s latter poems are rather complex, as the poet tries to include all the formal elements that he had been developing over his long period of poetic fertility. The analysis of the poems in this paper can open a way to grasp Hardy’s treatment of temporality as it has considered how Hardy tried to convey the feelings of love and nostalgia, and how they are connected to each other through the poetic interrelation of space and time. It allows the reader to understand Hardy differently, beyond the disputes over whether he was a major or

minor poet,, and to grasp how he uses certain clever poetic device in order to exemplify how memory is created, and how it is linked to place and space.

In my opinion, Hardy can be considered one of the most important poets on the subject of time.. The speaking voices he enacts in his poems serve as a form of showing how the suffering of a memory can stay for a long time in somebody, not only as a feeling, but also as something has to be confronted: poetry itself, with all its formal beauty and technique, is the result of this confrontation. This paper has been useful to me in order to describe how the notions of memory and loss are inevitably and strongly linked to the subject of space, and how poetry can be the result of this conceptual and sentimental relationship.

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